

Message Text

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51

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSC-05 /057 W

----- 120746

R 101530Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4698

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOCI, PFOR, SF, US

SUBJECT: LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL MAY PROMPT SOME

DESEGREGATION

REF: CAPE TOWN 493

1. LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL (REFTEL) HAS PASSED ALL STAGES IN HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AND IS CURRENTLY AWAITING SENATE RUBBER-STAMPING AND SIGNATURE OF STATE PRESIDENT TO BECOME LAW.

2. ACT WILL CODIFY EXISTING SITUATION IN WHICH FOREIGN BLACK TOURISTS ARE ABLE TO MAKE USE OF HOTEL FACILITIES. HOTELS WILL CONTINUE TO BE OBLIGED TO INFORM MINISTRY OF JUSTICE'S LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF PASSPORT DATA RELATING TO BLACK GUESTS. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF JUNE 9, LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD CHIEF, ERIC LEROUX, STATED THAT ONCE AMENDMENT BECOMES LAW ALL FOREIGNERS, REGARDLESS OF RACE, WILL HAVE TO PRESENT PASSPORTS UPON CHECKING INTO HOTELS. HE DID NOT STATE REASON FOR THIS, BUT REVIEW OF REPORT OF SELECT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE, WHICH STUDIED BILL, INDICATES THAT HOTEL OWNERS AND OTHERS WISH TO AVOID

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EMBARRASSING SITUATIONS CAUSED BY SINGLING OUT BLACK GUESTS TO

PRESENT PASSPORTS. (POSSIBILITY OF GREATER CONTROL, OR AT LEAST KNOWLEDGE, OF VISITORS' ACTIVITIES CANNOT BE DISCARDED AS AN ADDITIONAL MOTIVE.)

3. ONCE PASSED, LAW WILL ALSO OPEN POSSIBILITY OF BETTER ACCOMMODATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS TRAVELING WITHIN REPUBLIC. AS EXPLAINED BY MINJUSTICE, CERTAIN NUMBER OF HOTELS WILL, UPON APPLICATION, BE DESIGNATED "INTERNATIONAL" FACILITIES AND WILL BE OPENED TO ALL SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS. THESE HOTELS WILL BE LOCATED IN URBAN CENTERS AND ALONG MAJOR DOMESTIC TRAVEL ROUTES. NON-"INTERNATIONAL" HOTELS MAY ACCOMMODATE AND SERVE BLACKS UPON RECEIPT OF PERMISSION FROM THE LIQUOR BOARD. MINJUSTICE KRUGER PROMISED THAT PRETORIA WILL PROVIDE 24-HOUR PHONE SERVICE TO PROCESS APPLICATIONS.

4. PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON ISSUE WAS PARTICULARLY COMPLEX OWING TO IMMENSE CONFUSION SURROUNDING CURRENT LAW AND PRACTICES. SYMPTOMATIC OF THIS WAS DISCOVERY, IN COURSE OF COMMITTEE HEARINGS, THAT UNDER EXISTING SOUTH AFRICAN LAW BLACKS CAN BE ACCOMMODATED AT ALL BUT A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE NATION'S 1400 HOTELS. (THEY MAY NOT, HOWEVER, BE SERVED LIQUOR WITHOUT GOVERNMENT APPROVAL.) THIS INTERPRETATION OF DE JURE SITUATION WHICH NOT ACCEPTED BY ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING LIQUOR BOARD'S LEROUX, ALLOWED OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN, WHO, ALONG WITH ALMOST EVERYONE ELSE IN COUNTRY, HAD BEEN UNAWARE OF IT, TO CHARGE THAT BILL WAS IN FACT RETROGRESSIVE. UNITED PARTY INTRODUCED PROPOSAL TO ALLOW HOTEL OWNERS TO SERVE WHOMEVER THEY WANT WITHOUT REGARD TO RACE. DISCRETION WOULD HOWEVER REMAIN IN HANDS OF HOTEL OWNERS. PROGRESSIVES AND REFORMISTS SUGGESTED ALL HOTELS SHOULD BE OPENED TO ALL RACES AND THAT PERMISSION TO MAINTAIN A RACIALLY-SEGREGATED FACILITY SHOULD REQUIRE SPECIAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY. PREDICTABLY, NEITHER IDEA PROSPERED.

6. IN TESTIMONY TO SELECT COMMITTEE, HOTEL OWNERS URGED THAT ONLY HIGHEST CLEAS (I.E., MOST EXPENSIVE) HOTELS BE DECLARED "INTERNATIONAL" BECAUSE THESE WILL ATTRACT CLIENTS (BOTH WHITE AND BLACK) LESS LIKELY TO PROMOTE "RACIAL FRICTION." IT IS PROBABLE THAT GOVERNMENT WILL FOLLOW THIS ADVICE. HOWEVER, OTHER SUGGESTIONS MADE TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE WERE REJECTED, INCLUDING ONE WHICH WOULD HAVE OPENED HOTEL FACILITIES ONLY TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BONA FIDE OR DOCUMENTED BLACK TRAVELERS. THE REJECTION OF THIS PROPOSAL WILL MEAN, ACCORDING TO LEROUX, THAT IF MINISTER OF JUSTICE DOES NOT EXERCISE HIS RIGHT TO RULE TO CONTRARY, ANY BLACK WITH SUFFICIENT FUNDS WILL BE ABLE TO USE HOTEL DINING ROOMS OF, FOR INSTANCE, CAPE TOWN'S HEERENGRACHT OR JOHANNESBURG'S CARLTON, IF THEY ARE DECLARED "INTERNATIONAL."

7. COMMENT: SUCH A DEVELOPMENT WOULD NOT ADDRESS THE CENTRAL

ISSUE OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN SOUTH AFRICA, THAT IS, THE
DENIAL OF POLITICAL POWER TO THE NATION'S BLACKS. NEVERTHELESS,
THE DESEGREGATION OF SOME PREVIOUSLY CLOSED DINING FACILITIES,
EVEN IF ONLY AVAILABLE TO A RELATIVELY SMALL ELITE, WOULD BE
A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION AWAY FROM PETTY APARTHEID. THE
EMBASSY WILL MONITOR THE SAG'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS LEGISLATION
TO SEE HOW LARGE A STEP WILL INDEED BE TAKEN.
BOWDLER

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